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Dixon - An Address...



ADDRESS.

The hopes expressed in my last address that this Board would, during its term of office, complete the provision of 7,000 additional places in our schools have been realised; and it is now, therefore, a reasonable expectation that we shall hereafter have to provide such further accommodation only as may be required by the growth of the population of the city.

School
Accommodation

The total number of seats in the elementary schools in Birmingham is 73,158,* of which 45,891 are in Board Schools, and 27,267 in Voluntary Schools; and, as the Education Department only requires that accommodation should be provided for one-sixth of the population—that is, for 71,528—we have at last reached the goal of our long continued efforts, and have provided 1,630 seats beyond the demands of the Government.

The number of children in average attendance in all the elementary schools of the city was, in August last, 60,957, and I estimate that the abolition of fees has increased this number to about 64,000, which is rather more than 9,000 below the accommodation.

School
Attendance.

Now lest it should be supposed that we have erected too many schools, I deem it right to make the following observations:—

1. That unless we have some margin between the average attendance and the accommodation we shall not be able to meet the difficulties caused by a continually shifting population.

* See Appendix I.

2. That the accommodation in the Standard Voluntary Schools is estimated on the basis of 8 square feet per child, instead of 10 square feet as in the Board Schools; and no one can deny that if 10 square feet are desirable in our splendid Board Schools, it is still more essential that that space should be given in the inferior Voluntary Schools. If this change were made, the accommodation in the Voluntary Schools would be reduced by no less than 3,796 places.

3. That the percentage of average attendance on the number on the books during the past year was 83·3 per cent. in the Board Schools and 78·1 per cent. in the Voluntary Schools, which percentage is 10 per cent. more in the Board Schools and 8 per cent. more in the Voluntary Schools than it was ten years ago; and that if a similar increase of percentage should be made during the next ten years, then, 7,613 more places would have to be provided, in addition to the requirements resulting from the growth of population. That this additional increase of 10 per cent. in the percentage of the average attendance in the Board Schools is a by no means improbable development is evidenced by the fact that on four occasions during the past year the average percentage of all the Board Schools rose to 86·8, and that during the fortnight ending October 2nd last, the average attendance in the Boys' and Girls' Departments of the Stratford Road School was over 93 per cent. Lastly, it is estimated that there are about 2,000 children at the present moment who are not on the books of any school, their absence being largely accounted for by the removal of their parents from one part of the city to another. Therefore, when I look at this question all round, I feel justified in the conclusion that we have not provided an excess of suitable accommodation for the existing population of the city, and that we must be prepared for the erection of more schools in those districts, like Small Heath, where the population is rapidly increasing.

Evening
Schools.

The number of scholars entered on the books of the Evening Schools at the commencement of the Session of

1890-91 was 1,628—which was about 50 per cent. in advance of the entries of the previous year. In consequence of the diffusion of information respecting the nature and value of these schools, and the abolition of fees, the number of applications for admission has risen this Session from 1,628 to 9,552, and there are more than 300 scholars over 21 years of age. In consequence of the demands of the manufacturers for overtime work as Christmas approaches, and other causes, the average attendance during the whole Session has not hitherto reached 50 per cent. of the number on the books. This irregularity of attendance not only increases the cost of the schools, but militates greatly against their usefulness, and it will be necessary that the Board should contend continuously and devotedly against this weakness of the new movement. Every inducement should be presented to young people to encourage them to take advantage of this new and important educational development. The subjects taught include French, Short-hand, Book-keeping, Drawing, Manual Instruction, Science, Practical Cookery, Domestic Economy, Dressmaking, and any other subject wanted by a reasonable number of pupils. It will therefore, hereafter, be the fault of the young persons themselves if they do not obtain all the knowledge that is necessary for success in their calling in life, and for pleasurable occupation during their leisure hours.

The effect of the abolition of fees in the Birmingham Day Schools has not been so striking as it has been in the Evening Schools, because in the former we already had between seven and eight thousand free order children, and in most of the departments the fee was only one penny. The increase in the Board Schools has been about 1,700 in average attendance; and it is believed that the increase in the Voluntary Schools has been proportionately greater. The annual gain to the Board by the fee grants will be about £8,000 per annum, a sum which will probably be equivalent to the extra cost of the Seventh Standard Schools and of the Evening Continuation Schools, when

Abolition of
School Fees.

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Dixon - An Address...

there being any difficulty in finding suitable positions for all our Seventh Standard boys—even when the number is increased by the erection of new schools.

A comparison of the Financial Statistics of 1890 and 1891 does not show any startling figures. The cost of school maintenance has increased from £2 5s. 8d. to £2 6s. 8d. per scholar; the Government grant from 19s. 6½d. to 19s. 11d. per head; the net cost per child to the ratepayers has risen from 19s. 4½d. to £1 0s. 9d.; and the precept from 9 6-10ths of a penny in the pound to 10 4-10ths of a penny.

Financial
Statistics.

In the Bridge Street Seventh Standard School the gross cost per scholar has risen from £7 10s. 1d. to £7 16s. 8d.; the net cost to the ratepayers from £2 14s. 11d. to £3 17s. 10d.; and the grant earned per head has decreased from £4 2s. 10d. to £3 8s. 9d. The increased cost of this school is partly owing to expenses incurred in adding two new class-rooms thereto, whereby the average attendance has been increased by a considerable number of scholars who have not yet earned any grant.

The work of the Appeals Committee has been carried on with increasing energy. †

Appeals.

The number of committals to Industrial and Reformatory Schools has slightly decreased. ‡

Industrial
Schools.

The receipts from the hire of rooms has remained stationary. *

Hire of Rooms.

The number of half-timers has increased from 88 to 154.

Half Timers.

The augmentation in the number of depositors in the Penny Banks from 7,346 in September, 1890, to 12,541 in

Penny Banks.

† See Appendix III. ‡ See Appendix IV. * See Appendix V.

September, 1891, consequent upon the abolition of the school fees is very satisfactory, and there is every reason to hope that this growth will continue.*

**Cookery
Classes.**

The number of girls under instruction in Cookery has increased from 1,884 (in 1890) to 2,360 (in 1891).†

**Raising of
Standard of
Exemption.**

There has not yet been time to realise the full result of the raising of the standard of total exemption from the fifth to the sixth, but I have ascertained that in the Icknield Street and Hope Street Schools the number of boys and girls in Standard VI. and upwards has increased from 219 in October, 1890, to 311 in October, 1891, or about 42½ per cent. The Head Masters of these schools are apprehensive that there may be difficulty experienced in providing proper class room accommodation for the higher standards when the full effect of the raising of the standard of total exemption has been experienced.

**Extension
of City
Boundaries.**

The result of the extension of the City Boundaries will be that an addition of eight Board Schools will be made to the forty-five now under the management of the Board—viz., one in Harborne, four in Balsall Heath, and three in Saltley and Little Bromwich. It is not at all likely that our financial position will be strengthened by this increase of our School District, but there can be no doubt that grave additional responsibilities will be thrown upon our successors; and my hope is that the educational condition of these outlying districts will not suffer by the great change that is coming over them.

**Retrospect,
1870-1891.**

**School
accommodation
and
Attendance.**

As I may not again have the honour of presiding over the Birmingham School Board, I desire briefly to recapitulate the enormous progress that has been made in Elementary Education during the 21 years of its existence.

In the year 1871, the total accommodation in inspected schools (all being Voluntary Schools) was 30,696 places, or

* See Appendix VI.

† See Appendix IX.

8·9 per cent. on the *then* population of the borough. The total accommodation is now 73,864 (27,267 being in Voluntary Schools and 46,597 in Board Schools), which gives a percentage of 17·2 on the *present* population of the city. The minimum space required by the department for each boy and girl is 10 square feet in the Board Schools, whilst in the Voluntary Schools the ancient limit of 8 square feet is still permitted.

When the Board commenced the erection of new schools, in 1871, the number of scholars on the books of the Voluntary Schools was 25,941, and the average attendance was 16,263, or 62·7 per cent. of the number on the registers. The number on the books in the Voluntary Schools in August last was 26,798, and the average attendance was 20,620, or 77 per cent. of the number on the registers. This most satisfactory increase of 4,357 in the average attendance is, of course, mainly, if not entirely, due to the efficient working of the system of compulsion. To this growth in the Voluntary Schools must be added the entire number of children in the Board Schools, which had no existence in 1871. In August last the number on the books of the Board Schools was no less than 49,100, and the average attendance was 40,337, or 82 per cent. I find it difficult to account for the average attendance in the Board Schools being 5 per cent. higher than in the Voluntary Schools: it may be the result of higher fees in the latter schools, or of the longer period which is allowed to elapse between the time when a child leaves a school and when the name is erased from the register. The comparison of the attendance in all the schools between 1871 and 1891 is as follows:—

	1871.	1891.
Number on the books	25,941	76,132
Number in average attendance	16,263	60,293

The percentages of increase during that period have been: in population, 25 per cent.; in school accommodation

140 per cent. ; in the number of children on the registers, 193 per cent. ; in the number in average attendance, 270 per cent. ; and since August last we have had a considerable increase in average attendance, consequent upon the abolition of fees.

Sites
and Buildings.

The 41 new Board Schools have been erected on sites averaging about an acre each. The playgrounds are covered with asphalte, and are provided with gymnastic apparatus, and each school has a caretaker's house. The teaching of the standard children is carried on in separate class rooms, and, during the last ten years, wherever the cost of the land was not too great, these class rooms have all been on the ground floor, and are approached through large central halls. The schools are well built and are furnished with all modern appliances and apparatus, and with what the Board, at the time of their construction, considered to be the most perfect system of warming and ventilation. The amount borrowed for the purchase of sites, the erection of buildings, and for the necessary fittings, furniture, and apparatus of the schools has been £650,000, of which £587,000 has still to be repaid. Great as this outlay undoubtedly is, being nearly £15 per child accommodated in the schools, I do not think that the ratepayers have entertained any serious objections to it ; on the contrary, I have reason to believe that they are proud of possessing schools of their own, which beautify the neighbourhoods in which they exist, and afford to their children the best primary education ever given in this country.

School Staff.

The proportion of Pupil Teachers to Adult Teachers in the large towns was as two to one in 1870. Now, in our Board Schools, the proportion is as one to three, and the probability is that they will cease to be counted on the staff of the schools before many years are over, and that their presence in the class-rooms will be for the sole purpose of being themselves trained in the art of teaching.

Curriculum.

Important additions have been made to the curriculum of the schools. The object lessons in the lower classes

have been greatly improved, and most of the schools have a museum of objects. In some schools these museums are somewhat considerable as regards the number of specimens, which are of a very useful character. For the upper standards, the organised system of science teaching has proved to be of great benefit, not merely on account of the exact information imparted, but far more through the effect upon the minds of the scholars in teaching them the relation of cause and effect, in training them to think, and in opening their eyes to the fact that principles underlie the many processes and phenomena that come under their observation, which it is interesting as well as useful to investigate. It also makes school work more attractive, and lifts them out of the dull, monotonous condition which a mere grinding for examinations usually entails. The girls learn those elementary branches that form the foundation of Domestic economy, and the boys are taught the properties of matter, and the principles of Mechanics.

All the children from the infants upwards learn singing from notes, and are systematically trained in physical exercises, which strengthen their muscles and invigorate their frames.*

The infants are taught on the principles of Kindergarten. All the boys in the Board Schools learn Drawing.†

Last year the number of girls learning Cookery was 2,360.

Manual Instruction is being gradually introduced into the Standard Classes, whereby the hand and the eye are effectively trained, and the use of tools becomes familiar to the boys.

The Seventh Standard Technical School in Bridge Street has provided instruction in Machine Construction and Drawing, Practical Plane and Solid Geometry, Mathematics, Theoretical and Applied Mechanics,

* See Appendix VIII.

† See Appendix VII.

Theoretical and Practical Chemistry, and the use of wood-working tools. The applications for admission to this school are now so numerous that many have to be refused for want of room.

Seventh
Standard
Children.

For the older girls Seventh Standard Classes have been formed in various centres, in which a higher course of instruction is given. So successful have these developments proved that it has been decided to erect a new Seventh Standard School at Small Heath for 600 boys and girls. In this school the curriculum will be still further widened, and the most perfect possible instruction will be given in all commercial as well as scientific subjects.

Scholarships.

In consequence of the generous and unsolicited contributions of private friends of education, a large number of Science and Art Scholarships have been awarded to the most deserving boys under the regulations of the Science and Art Department. Scholarships have also been awarded whereby children who have passed through the Elementary Schools may go to the King Edward's Grammar Schools and to the Mason College. The result of this valuable outside assistance has been most encouraging; many of the boys have been thereby raised to high positions, and one has distinguished himself and the city which educated him by becoming Fifth Wrangler at the University of Cambridge, and has since been elected a Fellow and Lecturer of his College.

The Cheap
Dinner and
Boot Funds.

The education of the poorest class has been materially assisted by gifts of boots and cheap or free dinners, which have been furnished by voluntary associations. That for providing cheap and free dinners is under the chairmanship of H.M. Inspector of Schools, Mr. Airy. The funds have been collected largely by the teachers, and have been liberally aided by the Messrs. Tangye and Mr. George Kenrick, while valuable assistance has been rendered by the honorary secretaries, Mr. Sargent and Mr. France.*

* See Appendices X. and XI.

Lending Libraries have been established in all the Boys' and Girls' Departments.

Lending
Libraries.

In May, 1879, the Board resolved that Moral Instruction Lessons should be given twice a week to all the children in the Boys' and Girls' Schools. Religious Services are also allowed to be carried on by outside voluntary associations on Tuesday mornings, before the commencement of the ordinary school lessons.

Moral and
Religious
Instruction.

The practice of the Board has been to allow the school rooms to be used for public and other meetings at a charge covering no more than the additional cost to the Board resulting therefrom. The value of the results of this policy may be gauged by the number of scholars in the Sunday Schools, which is continually increasing, and now amounts to over 10,000.

Letting of
School Rooms
for Sunday
Schools

It will assist the Board and the public in forming an estimate of the progress made since the passing of the Education Act of 1870, if I remind them that in 1868 enquiries were made into the educational condition of the town by the Birmingham Education Society, with the following results:—Of 28,690 children between the ages of 7 and 15, no less than 5,275, or 18·4 per cent., had never been to school at all; and of the young persons who were then at work, 16 per cent. had never been in any school, and 64 per cent. could neither read nor write. Now it would be difficult, and soon it will be impossible, to find a child of respectable parents unable to read and write.

Education in
1870.

The percentage of children in Standards IV. and upwards was only 8·4 per cent. in the Board Schools in 1875; now it is 33·5 per cent.

The number of young persons between the ages of 7 and 16 apprehended by the police and taken before the magistrates averaged 1,373 per annum during the five years 1871-75, and only 815 during the years 1886-90, a decrease of more than 40 per cent.

I cannot conclude this, which may be, as I have already stated, my last address to the Board, without expressing my hopes with reference to the future development of Elementary Education in Birmingham :—

1. That the Day Training College, which has now become an institution of great promise, may be placed under the control of the School Board, and become a charge on the rates ; that it may be extended so as to provide *all* the male as well as female teachers required in the Elementary Schools of the city ; and that every class in our schools may be taught by a trained certificated teacher.

2. That in the Day and Evening Schools of the Board there may be given, by highly qualified teachers, instruction in *every* subject that will be useful, not only in the bread-earning pursuits of life, but also in the development of higher tastes and aspirations in the minds of the pupils.

3. That instruction may be so given in our schools that it shall be a pleasure instead of a fatiguing task to the scholars ; that the old-fashioned system of cramming the child's mind with knowledge, which wearies and soon passes away, may be superseded by successful efforts to train and develop all the physical, mental, and moral faculties of the pupil, so that when he leaves the school he may be in the best possible condition for the performance of all the duties of life.

And, lastly, that for all the gifted children in our Elementary Schools there may be provided Scholarships in higher educational institutions, so that every scholar may feel that the highest careers are open to him, and that by energy and self-denial he may be able to attain one of those great positions which have hitherto been monopolised by the wealthy and the high-born.

Conclusion.

During the twenty-one years of my connection with this Board I have received unvarying consideration and kindness from all its members and from all its officials, for which I now tender my hearty and grateful thanks.

APPENDICES.

I. SCHOOL ACCOMMODATION.

The following are the details of the alterations which have taken place in the Elementary School Accommodation of the City during the past year:—

Burbury Street (Board)	opened	...	1,044	places.
Tilton Road	"	"	1,070	"
Floodgate Street	"	"	1,115	"
Rea Street	"	extension	650	"
St. Michael's (Roman Catholic)	"	"	190	"
St. Matthias's (Church)	"	"	80	"
			4,149	"
Park Street (Board) closed		706		
St. John's (Roman Catholic) closed		184		
			890	"
Total increase			3,259	"

TOTAL ACCOMMODATION.

	Nov., 1890.	Nov., 1891.
Board Schools	42,718	45,891
Denominational and Efficient		
Private Schools	27,261	27,267
	69,979	73,158

II. SCHOOL ATTENDANCE.

	Board Schools.	Denominational and Efficient Private Schools.	Total.
(a) AVERAGE NO. ON THE BOOKS :			
Year ending Aug, 1890	46,394	26,318	72,712
" " " 1891	47,390	26,178	73,568
(b) AVERAGE ATTENDANCE :			
Year ending Aug., 1890	38,704	20,559	59,263
" " " 1891	39,490	20,461	59,951
(c) PERCENTAGE OF AVERAGE ATTENDANCE TO NO. ON THE BOOKS :			
Year ending Aug., 1890	83·4%	78·1%	81·5%
" " " 1891	83·3%	78·1%	81·5%

III. APPEALS.

		Year ending Sept., 1890.	1891.
No. of Notices served on parents ...	...	9,766	9,739
No. of parents who attended ...	...	4,689	4,561
No. of prosecutions ordered ...	...	3,040	3,749
No. fined 2/6 ...	...	1,043	2,175
No. fined 5/- ...	...	607	1,083

IV.—REFORMATORIES AND INDUSTRIAL SCHOOLS.

		1890.	1891.
Sent to Reformatories ...	Boys	42	41
" " " ...	Girls	7	5
" " Industrial Schools and Training Ships ...	Boys	62	68
" " Industrial School's ...	Girls	15	8
Total ...		<u>126</u>	<u>122</u>

V.—HIRE OF ROOMS.

(a)—AMOUNT RECEIVED FOR LETTINGS.

Year ending September, 1890	...	...	£1,186	14	3
„ „ „ 1891	...	...	1,189	7	0

(b)—PARTICULARS OF LETTINGS.

Week-day Meetings.

					1890.	1891.
Religious	...	...	...	...	42	18
Political	...	...	...	...	218	180
Social	...	...	...	...	512	484
Other Purposes	...	...	...	...	402	499
Periodical Meetings of Associations	...	...	...	...	28	38

Sunday Meetings.

Sunday Schools	...	...	...	...	23	29
Adult Schools	...	...	...	...	27	19
Services held regularly	...	...	...	...	13	13
Occasional Services and Meetings	...	...	...	...	115	158

VI.—PENNY BANKS.

	Sept., 1890.	Sept., 1891.
No. of Banks in operation	83	89
No. of depositors	7,346	12,541
Amount on deposit	£1,456/7/1	£1,912/1/3½
Average amount due to each depositor,	3/11½	3/0½

A very considerable increase has taken place in the number of deposits since the abolition of school fees. In one school the number of depositors increased from 189, in August last, to 445 on October 12th; and in another the amount of the weekly deposits went up, during the same period, from £1 12s. 8d. to £5 11s. 9d.

